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ABSTRACT

Various approaches to educating the gifted and talented around the world are illustrated through descriptive reviews of gifted education in selected countries, including: Australia; Poland; England, Scotland, and Wales; and Israel. Following these reviews is an examination of several issues in gifted education around the world. This examination encompasses: the domination of intellectual giftedness within the concept of giftedness, identification procedures which involve assessment of intellectual or academic aptitude, the use of special classes or integrated classes, acceleration versus enrichment, curricular and instructional differentiation, teacher education, out-of-school provisions for gifted education, affective development of the gifted, the gifted disadvantaged, and research and evaluation in gifted education. The paper concludes with the observations that gifted education has a cyclical history in many countries and seems to be an esoteric endeavor rather than part of the educational mainstream. (JDD)

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Education of the Gifted in World Perspective

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EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE*

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Since 1975, five World Conferences on Gifted and Talented have been held. There have been as many as 1200 participants from some 40 countries. The Fifth World Conference which was held in Manila in August 1983 drew almost 500 conferees from 26 nations. Clearly, there is considerable interest in the education of the gifted and talented children and youth in countries around the world. This interest is not new in some countries but, in others, a concern for the education of the gifted is something which has emerged relatively recently. Some nations are experiencing a revival of interest in the gifted while others are just beginning to explore possibilities for nurturing their most able students.

In 1961 and 1962, two Year Books of Education were published which were titled, Concepts of Excellence in Education and The Gifted Child (Bereday & Lauwerys, 1961, 1962). These two volumes examined the various concepts of excellence and the approaches to education of the gifted cross nationally. The editors originally intended that the 1961 volume would cover the field, hoping "to give a review of the notions of talented throughout the world and the way in which these notions receive political, social, and cultural

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implementation in different schools systems." However, it soon became clear that the problem of gifted education had so many ramifications that two volumes were necessary rather than one. The authors from a variety of countries described, analyzed and interpreted "what happens when attempts are made on a national scale to discover and to educate gifted children in all ranks of the population."

A survey of almost three dozen countries completed for the Fifth World Conference in Manila suggests that the same profusion of concepts of excellence and the same diversity in provisions for the gifted continues. The difficulty which Bereday and Lauwerys encountered in arriving at a consensus with respect to definitions of what constitutes giftedness, talent or genius persists.

The United States of America is the nation which has been making provisions for gifted students for well over a century and the diversity of definitions, identification procedures, policies, and program differentiation is so great that anything found elsewhere in the world regarding the gifted and talented can be found somewhere in the United States as well. But, concern for the education of the gifted in America has had a cyclical history, waxing and waning with social, political, economic developments influencing educational policy and practice. To describe education of the gifted in the United States is difficult because one must deal with the broad and diverse definitions of giftedness and talent and their operationalization; the various efforts at differentiation of curriculum and instruction; the organizational approaches ranging from enrichment within the classroom to special classes and even special schools for the gifted; the preservice and inservice programs for teachers of the gifted; the special counseling and ancillary services provided gifted; the varied non-school agencies and institutions which provide supplementary and complementary opportunities

for the gifted; the policies affecting the education of the gifted at the local, state and federal levels; the involvement and guidance of parents of the gifted; the national and regional talent searches and competitions; and the relatively vast research activity. Each aspect or element of policies and programs for the gifted in the United States is issue-laden and controversial.

Some illustrations of developments follow which provide a "flavor" of programs in various countries.

The Australian Schools Commission's paper, The Education of Gifted Students (1980) explored a number of issues in that nation which seemed to result in general ambivalence toward gifted students. After examining a number of definitions (mainly from the United Kingdom and the U.S.A.), the Commission proposed the following as appropriate to the Australian scene: "Gifted children are those possessing to an outstanding degree demonstrated competence or potential in intellectual, creative and/or other abilities and needing different education or services beyond those provided by the regular school." (p. 12) The Commission cited a number of issues connected with the identification of gifted students such as achievement versus potential, identifying gifted among minority and disadvantaged groups and underachievers, and urged that identification procedures be varied in relation to the area of endeavor. Procedures appropriate to general academic performance, for example, will differ from those for identifying giftedness in the artistic/cultural area. A range of procedures and techniques are discussed--tests, teacher and parent judgments, performance and product evaluation--and the caution is expressed that none of these assessment measures can identify student abilities and aptitudes with absolute certainty.

As for programs, there are a variety of organizational and instructional options available, each with its avid supporters and equally strong detractors. Ability grouping, acceleration, enrichment, and curriculum modification are the general rubrics the Commission presented. The Commission report observed that while there is no agreement as to the most approprate means of delivering educational services to the gifted students, there seems to be consensus as to the necessary characteristics and key provisions in successful programs. These include: teachers, curriculum differentiation, student selection procedures, a statement of philosophy and objectives, staff orientation, an evaluation plan, and administrative arrangements.

The Commission's report concluded with a survey of existing programs in the Australian states: New South Wales with "Opportunity C Classes;" Victoria, with no specific policy but a Gifted Children's Task Force established in 1977 to provide consultancy to teachers and schools; Queensland which emphasizes "meeting the needs and interests of all students within the existing school structure" and uses community participation in schools to provide a wide variety of educational experiences; South Australia which issued a policy statement in 1979 indicating "that students will ordinarily be educated in their neighborhood schools and the necessary curriculum materials to allow for these students will be provied by the Department of Education;" Western Australia, which had had special provisions for creatively-oriented secondary school students since 1967, and issued a policy statement "to focus and formalize a range of existing provisions" presently operating in primary schools, each of which has its own design, including a total withdrawal program to partial withdrawal or special interest center programs, and secondary school specialist and

advanced programs; Tasmania which generally provides for enrichment activities and short-term pullout programs; Australian Capital Territory which has no specific provisions for gifted students but has had a trend "in both primary and secondary schools . . . towards individual development and progression within deliberately heterogeneous groupings;" Northern Territory whose policy of special provisions for the gifted is an integral part of its "equal opportunity for all through the provision of an appropriate education for all." The Schools Commission report also explored appropriate teacher training, curriculum development, research and support services.

In Poland, schools are seen as having "an egalitarian character, the main assumption being that all children are born with similar mental abilities, and only environmental features bring about differences between them. Talented children often come from environments rich in developmental stimuli." (Borzym, 1983) In general the talented are cared for, even in experimental situations, in unselected groups and there are no special schools for children with specific talents such as one finds in the U.S.S.R. or the U.S.A. since the creation of separate schools or curricula for the gifted is viewed as undemocratic and elite-forming. Borzym points out that Polish educators "agree that a modern school should be able to identify each pupil's talents and abilities and apply the relevant educational methods which are optimal for their development."

The gifted in Polish primary and secondary schools are those who are intellectually gifted, identified primarily on the basis of their performance and schores on various examinations and in competitions, school achievement and data obtained from teachers' observations." Psychological measures are only sporadically employed and then only as a subsidiary

assessment. The major provisions made for the gifted include: acceleration of syllabi leading to earlier school-leaving; special profile classes in secondary schools in mathematics, physics, humanities, biology and chemistry, taught by teachers with higher professional standards; experimental mathematics classes taught by university lecturers; schools or classes in which a foreign language (Russian, English, French or German) is the language of instruction for all subjects; optional tutorials which provide deeper insights into the subject of choice, similar to university tutorials and seminars; special interest clubs and associations, such as physics and technology clubs and mathematics clubs); subject olympiades which provide annual national competitions in mathematics, biology, literature, foreign languages, and history; and a Patents Bureau in which inventions and designs of children are assessed and accepted if the idea has not been previously patented. Teachers are selected for these various provisions on the basis of their interest in working with gifted students, readiness to experiment, and high level of competence in their subjects.

Through the 1960s, the grammar schools for which youngsters were chosen through the "Eleven-plus" selection process and the Sixth Form (three years of highly specialized study from age 16 on) were seen as the ways by which England provided for its most intelligent, academic-achieving students. In the past two decades, the Department of Education and Science, the Schools Council, many of the Local Education Authorities, the National Association for Gifted Children, the Leonardo Trust, many of the universities and colleges, and a variety of other groups have become actively concerned with the identification and education of the gifted.

For example, the Schools Council Gifted Pupils Project, coordinated

by Ralph W. Callow, aimed at pulling together work on the education of the gifted going on in spearate local education authorities. Some 30 local authorities took part in the Project which provided a cooperative network concerned with creating a central bank of information, a central collection of materials, a collection of transparencies of exemplar materials, and a number of information booklets which describe methods and materials in specific curriculum or skill areas. (Callow, 1981)

The National Association for Gifted Children has reported on a study of preservice and inservice teacher training in England, Scotland and Wales for Teaching Able and Gifted Children. (1982) Of 71 colleges and university departments of education which responded to the questionnaire, "sixty four declared their support for the principle of enabling teachers to acquire an understanding of the needs of able and gifted children and the skills of identifying and teaching them." (p. 3) A few colleges or departments have a tutor with special responsibility for developing courses and programs and for coordinating work in the gifted. Some one-year programs assume that tutors include the topic of giftedness in their tutorials while a few have developed a special interest and expertise in the teaching of gifted and able pupils. The survey found that 54 of the 59 Local Education Authorities which responded supported the principle of enabling teachers to acquire skills and understandings needed to work with the gifted and able. Working parties on gifted and able have been established in 35 Authorities, teachers are engaged in producing learning materials ranging across the entire curriculum but concentrating in science and mathematics. A number of LEAs had links of various kinds to local colleges to provide inservice teacher training. Several Authorities have assigned responsibility for developing a coherent program for the gifted and able to a particular individual.

In Israel, in the late 1960s, professors at several universities interested in developing the potential of future students, offered after-school enrichment courses, first for high school pupils and later for junior high and elementary pupils. In 1970-71, a Ministry of Education study commission recommended that the Ministry create a Department for Gifted Children to initiate new directions and programs and to coordinate activities nationally and that financial and logistical support be given universities to help them with the programs already operating. The first priority for the new department became the expansion and refinement of the existing system of enrichment centers. (Bitan and Kramer, 1981)

By 1980-1981, over 5,000 students were served in the Enrichment Centers network, an estimated 30-40 percent of the potentially identifiable gifted population ages 6 through 17. The Centers are funded on a shared-cost basis by parents' tuition, the Ministry of Education and the local sponsoring agency. Student interest tends to focus on mathematics and science with computer-based and laboratory experiences although there is a diversity of experiences offered, including art, music, literature, history, philosophy, journalism and creative writing. The enrichment program teachers include a majority from university faculties. Included in this program are intensive workshops for the nation's best young chess players and a center for Israeli-Arab children.

A committee of specialists convened to advise on future directions for gifted education recommended expansion of the Enrichment Centers across the country and the parallel creation of special classes for the highly gifted who were seen as needing something more than simply afer-school enrichment. The committee rejected the notion of special schools and opted instead for creating special classes within existing schools. Such

classes were established at the third and fourth grade levels in some of the elementary schools in Tel-Aviv and Haifa. Specially prepared curricula were developed for these classes and a complete program of study is now available for grades 3-12. These curricula incorporate acceleration, a greater range of learning opportunities, and increased breadth of study. For example, the standard English curriculum is primarily linguistic and conversational in its approach while the English curriculum for the gifted stresses literature and writing plus higher levels of linguistic fluency. Early specialization is discouraged. Where students demand more specialization, correspondence courses through the Open University, mentor programs, and private industry-sponsored courses seem to meet the need. Teachers in gifted programs in Israel are selected from the general pool, having evidenced competence in their fields and a sensitivity to the special needs of gifted students. Teachers are provided with appropriate inservice training. Israel is also concerned with the "gifted disadvantaged"--children from low-income culturally different populations--and is making special efforts to identify and nurture such children.

These four countries illustrate the various approaches found in educating the gifted and talented. In countries all over the world, developed and less-developed, there is a concern for identifying and nurturing the gifted and the talented, whatever labels are applied to this population. The philosophical base and motivations for such concerns vary. In some instances, the motivation is one of developing brainpower and specialized talents; in others, the efforts stem from a concern with equality of educational opportunity and the full development of individual potential for self-fulfillment as well as meeting societal needs. Egalitarianism and elitism are arguments used by both proponents and

opponents to making adequate and appropriate provisions for the gifted and talented. Under various political and economic systems, socialist or capitalist, there are provisions for the gifted and while the rhetoric may differ, the issues and the programs are not dissimilar.

More and more countries are adopting or at least verbalizing a broader or more liberal definition of education. However, intellectual giftedness still dominates concepts of giftedness in most countries. A number of countries are adding creativity to the guiding concept, but creativity has as many meanings as does intelligence. In early stages of concern, most nations seem to focus on intellectual and academic development and only later move to such areas as graphic and performing arts or other so-called "non-academic areas." In some countries, however, it is such areas as dance, drama or music which receive special attention because they are viewed as less controversial than academic areas. That is, to differentiate in the common curricular areas is viewed as "elitist" while differentiation in performance areas is more generally accepted.

The basic identification procedures around the world involve some assessment of intellectual or academic aptitude even in nations where psychological assessment is still at a relatively primitive state. Some countries recognize the problems inherent in adapting tests and other instruments from places such as the United States or England but continue to use such instruments because indigenous ones are not yet available. Few nations use as many different instruments and scales as does the United States where a recent national study examined no fewer than 65 instruments purportedly measuring general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creativity, leadership, visual and/or performing arts

aptitude for various age groups, some for disadvantaged populations but most for general or advantaged groups, at some stage of the identification process.

Identification procedures and techniques are usually tied to the prevailing concept of giftedness. In some countries, identification is a multi-step process--initial screening, selection, and evaluation. In some instances only tests are used while in others informal approaches are also used. Evaluation and research on identification instruments and procedures continue to be rare in almost all countries.

Programs for the gifted may or may not involve special classes. The issue of whether to separate the gifted either part-time or full-time, or whether to provide for enrichment in the regular classroom has not been resolved nor is it every likely to be. Special classes have a long and controversial history in many national educational systems. Groups may be selected on the basis of ability, achievement, aptitudes, motivation, interests or other bases. Groups may meet for a few minutes per day or for the entire school day and may involve the entire student body or just the gifted students. The motives for forming special groups or streams or tracks vary. Relatively few nations have special schools for gifted or talented children. Some nations have policies which clearly forbid any special classes or groups but mandate instruction for the gifted in the regular classroom. Most countries recognize that whether the gifted are provided for in the regular classroom or in special sections or classes, differentiated educational provisions must be made.

Nor is the issue of acceleration versus enrichment resolved in most countries. Acceleration involves making educational experiences available in less time or at an earlier age than is normal. Enrichment involves

studying in great depth or breadth or at a conceptually advanced level rather than a basic level. In fact, most programs provide for both acceleration and enrichment and the debate appears to have to do more with administrative provisions such as grade skipping or early admission to a program and to the affective consequences of some forms of acceleration.

Most countries recognize the need for curricular and instructional differentiation as the point of special programs or provisions for the gifted and talented. This differentiation may be in terms of: (a) breadth and/or depth of study, (b) tempo or pace, or (c) nature or kind. As one probes into the instructional substance of various programs, all three kinds of differentiation can be found. However, differentiated curriculum and instruction seem to be less well conceptualized than the organizational or administrative arrangements made in most countries. A few countries seem to be developing special curricular materials for classes and programs for the gifted but in many countries the classroom teacher is expected to design differentiated educational experiences on his/her own, often without any appropriate training or support.

Teacher education for working with gifted and talented either at the preservice or inservice level is not a widespread practice. Formal, structured teacher education programs for preparing teachers to work with the gifted are probably best developed and certainly most numerous in the United States. The U.S.A. is possibly the only country which has, in some of the states, special licensing or certification of teachers for the gifted. A survey in England and Wales, for example, indicated that a good proportion of the teacher preparing institutions subscribe to the principle that teachers of the gifted need some preparation but not all of those have courses available. Some colleges and departments of education

have a special interest and expertise in this area leading, in some instances, to the award of certificates or diplomas in the teaching of gifted children. Compared to other areas of special education, specialized programs for teachers of the gifted in countries around the world seem to be rare.

In a good number of countries, out-of-school provisions seem to be either the only provisions made for the gifted or talented or represent a significant component of such provisions. The extracurricular centers in South Africa, the activities of the National Association for Gifted Children in England, the various programs in non-school settings in the United States and New Zealand are prototypical of these out-of-school provisions. While such out-of-school provisions are often supplementary or complementary to in-school provisions, they are significant. In some countries, full use of community resources is viewed as essential for developing talent potential--the school alone cannot provide for optimal development of these youngsters. Museums, libraries, laboratories, studios and other educative agencies and institutions are all involved in the education of the gifted and talented. Mentor programs--relating gifted children to adult specialists--are becoming a common practice for extending the educational resources for the gifted.

The attention paid to the affective development of gifted students seems to be relatively rare in most countries. The stress is generally on cognitive development and academic achievement, usually conceived in terms of the traditional disciplines or specialized areas of manpower. The literature from only a very few countries reports concern with emotional, values, attitudinal or motivational development of gifted children and youth. There seems to be little recognition of special potential or

special problems in the affective development of the gifted or talented nor is there very much attention paid to any special responsibilities to society on the part of the gifted. There is a good deal of rhetoric concerning leadership development but this tends to be little more than assertions concerning "our gifted children as future leaders." In many countries, there is an expectation that the gifted child, having developed his/her potential, will use it in a socially valuable way and thus exercise "leadership in his/her field."

In some countries, the guiding principle appears to be one of the schools enabling an individual to develop his/her potential to the maximum, regardless of the area of endeavor. In other countries, it is the national needs for specialized manpower which seem to guide program development and channeling of able individuals.

A concern for identification and nurturance of gifted individuals from disadvantaged or culturally different populations is evident in a number of countries and is a concern which is apparently growing. Some systems recognize that the racially and ethnically different and the economically disadvantaged populations represent the largest untapped talent reservoir and are making particular efforts to identify and develop the gifted and talented in those pools. Several countries are focusing on better ways of identifying these different and/or disadvantaged; others are testing more appropriate educational provisions. This concern for the group which is called the "gifted disadvantaged" in the United States is often considered part of the drive for educational equity.

Research endeavors concerning giftedness and its nurturance varies from practically none to an area of heavy concentration for researchers and evaluators. In the United States, there are hundreds of studies done

each year dealing with all aspects of gifted education. These studies range from large-scale, sophisticated research to both well- and poorly-designed doctoral dissertations. The requirement that evaluation be done in connection with certain funding programs has brought about an increase in both the quantity and the quality of such evaluations. There is an Educational Research and Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) Center which is devoted to research and information concerning the gifted and talented. In most countries, however, research and evaluation on gifted education is very rare or non-existent.

Other aspects of gifted and talented education might be cited, with many of the issues and problems involved seemingly common and universal. Two closing observations can be made. First, in many countries, gifted education has a cyclical history. In the United States, and to a lesser extent in several other countries, the reasons for these cycles are a matter of some speculation--as to why they have occurred and what might be done to make gifted education a more integral part of the educational system's efforts to educate all children in adequate and appropriate ways. The second and related observation is that gifted education in too many countries seems to be an esoteric endeavor rather than part of the educational mainstream. It may be that because the gifted and talented are perceived as constituting a relatively small proportion of the total population that it is so often viewed as intended for and conducted by an inner circle of advocates. Gifted education must not be thought of as only that part of the total program labelled "gifted education"--the pullout program, the special class, the enrichment activities. Rather, what is clearly needed is total school planning for the pursuit of excellence and the nurturance of individual talent potential.

The education of the gifted glass is half-empty or half-full. Gifted education in countries around the world is alive. However, it has some way to go before it can be pronounced sound, healthy and stable.

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